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ANCIENT LIFE AMONG THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA INDIANS

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WOMAN GATHERING SEEDS. An important task among the southern California Indians.

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Introduction

HORDES of immigrants during the last century have all but drowned out the original southern Californians—our Indian tribes. Yet some still survive in little villages remote from subdivisions, and many more are mixed in with the general population.

Knowledge of their old life, however, is rapidly dying—and so is interest in it. Today young Indian men are mainly concerned with mechanical gadgets, while every girl—there may be exceptions—dreams of becoming a trained nurse or a stenographer, or hopes to marry outside the tribe.

But we can reconstruct a great deal of that old life from written sources and archeological diggings—the former dealing especially with the Luiseño group, whose retention of the old knowledge was discovered by University of California ethnologists before it was too late; and their records are the source from which most of the information here presented was derived.¹

The Luiseños are the southernmost tribe in California speaking a dialect related to that of the modern Shoshones, and are named from San Luis Rey Mission, back of Ocean-side, in the vicinity of which they lived—and some still remain. Some information was obtained from personal contact with surviving tribesmen, while a few details had to be guessed from recorded customs of neighboring tribes. In some cases the sources did not agree, probably because customs differed in the different clans.

Home Life and Industries

Simply to catalog what an ancient people had and recite what they did is dry and lifeless; if we could only visit them, actually see them and talk with them, how much more satisfactory that would be! So, instead of calling up the ghosts of the past, let us step back in time to the year of 1765 and be, to these people, friendly visitors not too different from

¹University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology: Vol. 8, No. 3. Dubois, Constance Goddard. The Religion of the Luiseño Indians of Southern California. Berkeley, 1908. Vol. 8, No. 4. Sparkman, Philip Stedman. The Culture of the Luiseño Indians. Berkeley, 1908. Vol. 26. Strong, William Duncan. Aboriginal Society in Southern California. Berkeley, 1929. ALSO: Kroeber, A. L. Handbook of the Indians of California. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 78, Washington, 1925.

themselves. And before we visit them, let us provide ourselves with a guide and a knowledge of the Luiseno language.

The California of that day is decidedly different. No streets, no roads, no freeways, no subdivisions, no stores—just a vast sweep of brushwood and forest, hills, mountains, valleys—rivers, creeks, springs. And no railroads, overhead wires, trucks, automobiles—or even horses. The only human traces are narrow trails from one village, or valley, or water-hole to another—paths which might just as well have been made by deer or antelope, as in fact some of them originally were.

We must realize that everything a person needs, first of all food, must be extracted by himself from this great wilderness by one means or another—unless we happen to be enjoying the hospitality of some Indian village. But even there our hosts will have to do the extracting; there are no groceries or butcher-shops.

"Let us follow this trail up the valley; I can see smoke ahead—there is probably a village on that terrace." We finally reach the slope leading up to the terrace, climb it—and there it is. A collection of some 15 semi-conical earthcovered huts; most round, some elongated, looking a little like Navaho hogans—quite unlike the dome-shaped thatched houses used by tribes adjoining on the north. Here and there are scattered arbors or *ramadas* and many low platforms upon which stand huge rough cylindrical baskets.

Our scent must have been blown down the wind toward the village, because suddenly out rushes a pack of barking dogs. We huddle together expecting them to attack, but keep on walking . . . The dogs charge up to a few yards distance, "sniff"—and turn away as if they had suddenly heard of some other attraction.

"What do these dogs do for a living?" we ask our guide. "Hunt game for their masters?"

"No-o" he replied, "not too much. Of course some are pets for children and old women, but their main use is to eat up garbage when their masters throw it out on the dump."

Now we approach one of the low huts, which has a rush mat for a door. The guide reaches down to open it, but we ask "Don't you knock or call?"

"No," he replies "just open the door."

Bending low we enter, going down nearly two feet with the aid of a stone step placed for the purpose, for the hard adobe floor is considerably lower than the ground out-

side. Some daylight comes in through a smoke-hole overhead, but most of the illumination is furnished by a low fire burning fitfully in a shallow pit in the middle of the room, which looks to be 12 or 15 feet in diameter. Around the walls are rolls of rush mats, fur robes, pots, baskets, bundles, balls of twine; while hanging from the poles overhead and stuck in behind them are various articles. One mat, however, at the back of the hut opposite the door, is unrolled, and on it sits an old woman, withered and thin, but not without pride, as her shell necklaces and neatly brushed hair show. She rises to greet us, and we note that the upper part of her wrinkled body is bare but she is wearing what looks like a Hawaiian grass skirt, which we learn is really made from flexible narrow strips of inner willow bark. It is open in front, where it overlaps an apron made of dangling cords attached to a woven top piece. Her legs and feet are bare.

"Are you alone?" we ask.

"Right now, yes," comes the reply. "My husband is dead, but my son is out hunting and should be home soon; his wife and children are visiting a neighbor."

Now we hear voices outside; the door curtain is raised and a young woman steps down into the hut—dressed like her mother-in-law, but with large abalone pendants dangling from her ears and hanging from her necklace and a wild-cat skin back-skirt. Two small naked children follow. The children are not wearing a stitch of clothing; but the little girl has a short string of shell beads around her neck.

The young woman is carrying a baby on a cradle-board. Our guide explains to her that we do things differently and would like to look at the cradle-board—so she hands it over, baby and all. The back of it is a little wooden ladder about 30 inches high and over a foot wide, with rungs about five inches apart, and we observe that these rungs run through holes in the uprights, sticking out a couple of inches on each side.

"My husband made that for me," the young mother says. "He's a good wood-worker."

We continue to look while the baby regards us with solemn brown eyes. On the ladder frame is laid a thick padding of rushes which seems to be made of pieces of old rush mats; then the baby, wrapped in soft-tanned deer-skin is held in place with broad, soft deerskin thongs looped over the projecting rungs of the ladder.

"How do you keep the baby clean?" we ask.

She reaches into a near-by basket and brings out a handful of soft shredded inner bark which looks like juniper. "When he gets this dirty we just burn it up," she explains, "Sometimes we use moss." She takes the baby off the board and lets him wriggle on a mat which she spreads for the purpose. And she throws a bunch of shredded bark from the cradle-board into the fire.



FIG. 1—MAN'S HAIR-DO WITH
FLINT KNIFE

Now we hear a heavier step and a sturdy young man enters—rather short of stature and dark of skin. His long hair is tied in a "horse-tail" behind and in it is stuck a flint knife with a long wooden handle, (Fig. 1) but he too is practically naked, except for a very small buck-skin breech-clout. Under his right arm he carries what looks to be a stuffed deer-head with antlers and with the hide attached, in the other hand a bow about 5 feet long—also a quiver made of wild-cat skin, full of arrows.

"The deer is outside," he tells his wife. "It's a young buck." She takes a flint knife from a pouch hanging on the wall—out of reach of the children—and goes out again, the youngsters following;

while grandma moves over to keep an eye on the baby.

"My wife will skin the deer and cut it up—that's her job," he tells us. "Also she must trade for meat I can eat."

"What's the deer-head for?" we ask.

To show us, he strings his bow, then slips his head into the neck skin until the deer head rests on his own, and his eyes come opposite two holes cut in the skin. Then he spreads the hide over his back, nocks an arrow on the string, (we note that it is made of carrizo cane, with a long slim hardwood foreshaft and a small flint point), and bending low,

begins to imitate the motions of a grazing deer. Among the bushes, at a little distance, he would really look like one. (Fig. 2)

"In this way," he says, "If I start down-wind from him, I can work my way up quite close to a grazing deer. Then it's easy to drive an arrow into him."

"You say your wife must trade for meat. Why?" we ask.

"Didn't you know a hunter must not eat his own kill? He'd lose his luck."

We thank him and step out to look around the village.

Quite near the huts, in fact between them and the edge of the bluff, are two corrals about six feet high, built of slender willows laid horizontally, supported by pairs of vertical posts, to form a tight brush fence enclosing in one case a near-circle perhaps fifty feet in diameter; the other somewhat smaller, maybe thirty feet. Both corrals have gateways four or five feet wide on the north side.

"You will see how these are used within a few days," the guide promises.

We walk out to the bluff overlooking the river, and see the path the women take when they go down for water. One is coming up now with a big pottery olla carried in a net bag on her back, the packstrap going across her forehead which is protected by a neat little basketry cap. Down stream from the path a little way, we come to the village dump where two or three dogs are busy chewing on bones.

"It's lucky these people have so many dogs," the guide says, "There isn't much smell even here."

Going back to the village proper we examine one of the huge cylindrical baskets, perched on a low platform of poles. It is coil weave, the coils being thick bundles of willow switches while the wrapping and the sewing holding the coils together seem to be strips of flexible inner bark of some kind. The top tapers in and the opening is covered with a thin stone slab. We raise this and peer in. The thing is full of acorns.

"These are the life of the tribe," says the guide. "They eat them almost every day anyhow—and if other food gives out they can live on these and nothing else. There are two kinds of oaks that give especially good acorns. Do you hear that thumping noise? I think I can show you how they fix them." He led us back of the village terrace this time, to the base of the hills. Here on a large granite ledge are a number of women sitting and chattering, each in front of a



FIG. 2—HUNTER IN DEER DISGUISE

bowl-shaped cavity in the rock. Each has two baskets, one containing acorns. We watch a woman carefully. She takes a handful of acorns, lays them on the rock, and cracks their shells with a small cobble. The shelled acorns she drops into the cavity, the shells she throws away.

When she has accumulated enough in the mortar hole she crushes them into meal with a massive stone pestle; then

scoops the meal out and into the other basket, cleans the last bit out with a fiber brush—and this goes on and on.

"I suppose it's all ready now to eat," we say to the guide.

"Oh, no, this way it has a very bitter taste; it still needs more work. Maybe I can show you." He leads us along until we reach a wash coming down from the hills. On its sandy bottom several women have fires burning, to heat water in pottery kettles. He speaks to one of the women, who volunteers to illustrate.

First she picks up a basket and shows it to us—it has a peculiar open weave, an "open twine" different from the others we have seen which show coiled weave. It is about 10 inches in diameter by 15 deep made of some thin species of rush. Now she scoops a hole in the sand close beside her fire and buries the basket until only the rim protrudes, filling in the sand tight around it. Now she fills the buried basket with meal from another container. "That's bitter new-pounded acorn meal," our guide says. "Sometimes they use just a hole in the sand lined with leaves instead of a basket."

Next the woman takes a wooden dipper and dips hot water out of the kettle, pouring it on the acorn meal in the buried basket, waiting until it soaks away before pouring on more. This she keeps on doing for some time; then she pulls the basket out of the sand, washing off the outside with dippers of water from the kettle—finally empties the contents into a pottery bowl. "Now it's ready to make mush or bread," the guide says.

"The bitter taste is gone. I think the mush tastes good cooked with meat broth; the bread is a thin little cake cooked on a flat stone at the edge of the fire

"These people are lucky to have pottery," the guide goes on. "A little farther north they use stone kettles to heat water and cook in; beyond that most of the tribes have to do these things in water-tight baskets, with hot stones."

"What about this pottery?" we ask. "Do the people here make it, or do they trade it in from outside?"

"Oh, they make it. I can show you a potter at work."

We return to the village proper, and away up at the far end we find a little ramada with a middle-aged woman sitting on a mat under it. On one side is an old basket filled with mixed clay; in front of her a shallow pottery bowl containing a half-formed pot. We watch with interest. First she takes a handful of clay and rolls it out on a flat slab of stone into a long cylinder—this she flattens with a few pats, lifts it

up and pinches it fast to the edge of her growing pot. After she has applied several such strips she takes a little round smooth pebble about three inches in diameter, and holding it inside the pot, she pats the outside opposite with a wooden paddle, thinning out and rounding the wall in this way—also blending these new strips with those that have gone before. Beside her sits a bowl of water into which she dips her tools from time to time. (Fig. 3)

"This woman makes four kinds of pots," the guide informs us. "Large-mouthed ollas or jars used for storing seeds, small-mouth ollas, or water-bottles, cooking pots and food bowls. You can see some of each kind drying under that low ramada over there. She also makes a lot of little short straight pipes for smoking *pavivut* tobacco."

"Aren't the pots ever decorated?" we ask.

For answer he lifts up a piece of matting which had been covering something not far from where the potter sits. That something proves to be her drinking-water bottle, a small-mouthed olla. This is reddish-buff in color, but covered with small triangle designs in darker red. "You see," he says as he covers it up again, "that they do decorate them sometimes."

"Now over here," he continues, pointing to an ash-filled pit, "is where she fires them—and that's what she uses for fuel." He indicates a big pile of partly rotted tree bark. "First, of course, the finished pots have to be dried in the shade under that arbor for a long time, and then she even warms them near a fire to be sure they won't crack. Finally she stacks them, upside down, in the pit and piles the rotten bark over them, then sets fire to it. At one time in the burning the whole pile is white hot, pots and all. After a while the fire burns down to ashes and the pots can be seen again. When they cool the woman rolls them all out and taps each one with a stick. If it rings, it's perfect; if it gives a dull sound, it's cracked and no good."

"Do they use just any clay?"

"Oh, no. Each potter knows a clay bed which yields good material for her work. She digs up the clay with a pointed stick, wraps it in an old deer hide and takes it home in her carrying-net. Then she spreads it out on the hide and breaks up the lumps with a rounded cobble, so she can pick out all the bits of stone and roots. Then she sprinkles on fine crushed rotten rock, which keeps the pottery from cracking, about one part to five, wets it and kneads

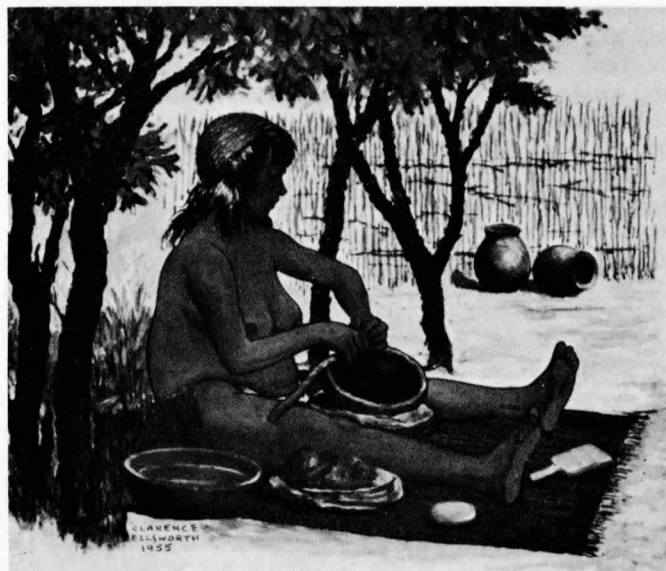


FIG. 3—WE SEE THE POTTER AT WORK. She adds strips of clay to the growing pot, then thins and blends them with a smooth stone and a wooden paddle, always kept wet.

the whole mess together. Then she's ready to go ahead as she's doing now."

The afternoon was waning by this time, so our guide leads us back to the hut we visited, where he has arranged for us to stay. Mats are spread for us and we sit down to eat. There are no separate servings, but a pottery bowl of acorn mush, a basket full of pieces of broiled venison, and a smaller basket of acorn-meal bread were there for all to dip into. For the mush we use clam-shells as spoons. The mush has been cooked with meat or in meat broth and has a good flavor; but the bread is rather tasteless. It is nothing more than unleavened dry-cooked acorn mush after all.

We lie back on our mats to rest and chat by the dim light of the flickering fire, and the question of clothing comes up.

"Don't these people wear any more clothing than we have seen today?" we ask the guide. "The young children are all naked and the men wear next to nothing; all the

women and girls have is the bark-strip back-skirt and the string apron. What do they do when it's cold?"

"They don't need much in this country," he replies. He speaks to the old woman and she unrolls a bundle, taking out a tanned deerskin cape which she slips over her shoulders and ties with a thong in front.

"That isn't much," we persist. "What if it's very cold?"

She laughs and models another cape, a longer one that looks to be woven of twisted strips of rabbit skin; finally she pulls out a long robe made of beautiful soft-tanned furry pelts sewed together. When she wraps herself in this only her feet and ankles are showing.

"That's made of sea-otter skins," the guide says, "traded in from the coast. It's warm and light—the best there is. Everybody has large woven rabbit-skin robes too, which they sometimes wear for overcoats if it's very cold. They're really warm, but heavy to carry and they get wet easily. You can see some rolled up against the wall for bed-blankets on cold nights."

"What about shoes? We haven't seen a single pair of moccasins."

"And you won't either," the guide replies. "These people don't wear moccasins. They go barefoot most of the time, and grown-ups have feet that are really tough."

He speaks to the old woman who raises a foot for us to look at—it seems to be covered with a thick callous. "The only time that they wear anything on their feet is when they expect to travel in rough, stony country; then they have sandals woven out of yucca fiber. There's a pair hanging on the wall." He takes it down to show us. It is rather coarsely woven, nearly half an inch thick, with cords for the ankles and toe-loops. We notice that our friends are unrolling their mats preparing to go to bed, so we do the same.

We are awakened by the sound of breaking sticks outside; a dim light is coming through the smokehole; Grandma, our host and the children are still sleeping on their mats—only our hostess is missing. Her mat and robe are neatly rolled. The fire is out.

Stepping outside, we find she has built a cooking fire under the arbor. As the guide says it's the custom to bathe every day we go down to the river and find a number of men and boys already in the water. On the way home we pass the potter's hut and see her outside, already at work.

"What's the matter—isn't she going to take her bath?" we ask.

"Oh, yes, later on" the guide explains. "When the men have all had theirs the women and girls go down as they find the opportunity. It's one of their rules—to bathe every day if they can find enough water!"

Thinking this a good example to follow, we return to the hut just in time to watch seeds being toasted in a pottery bowl over some coals while our hostess stirs them with a stick. She has to repeat the process a number of times before she has enough to boil with meat broth for the family's breakfast mush. When this is done she carries the pot into the hut and we follow. The mush is really delicious and we are offered some pieces of dried venison to chew on.

"What kind of seeds were in that mush?" we ask. "It certainly was good."

"The seeds of chia, a kind of sage, they call it *pasbal*," the guide replies. "That's one of the best, but they use many kinds of seeds."

"But how can they gather small seeds? Surely they can't pick them out one at a time. It would take forever."

For reply he calls the younger woman over and explains the situation. She gets a large deep bowl-shape basket and puts it in her carrying net; then she dons a basket cap, and slings the pack net with the basket on her back, the packstrap across her forehead over the cap; then she takes a shallow bowl basket in her left hand and a basketry fan in her right. Now she walks about pretending to beat seeds with the fan off imaginary plants into the small basket, (Cover) occasionally dumping them into the large one on her back. Just then her husband speaks up. "I showed them how to hunt and now my wife teaches them how to gather seeds. They should keep from starving from now on!" They all laugh.

"That's all there is to seed gathering," the guide resumes, "except to winnow out the chaff when she gets home, and to store the seeds in a big pottery jar."

"How does she winnow the seeds?"

"Just by tossing them in a big bowl basket so the wind can blow away the chaff. These people eat lots of plant foods," he continues, "cactus fruits, different kinds of berries, various plants they cook for greens, or eat raw while they are young and tender. They even roast one kind of yucca stalk in a hole in the ground while they are still soft in the spring and

cook and eat yucca pods and flowers. They eat everything that is edible, including some roots and bulbs."

"You speak of cactus fruits. Aren't they too prickly to eat?"

"Yes, but these people have a sort of coarse-woven bag they put the fruits in and shake them up and down a few minutes. When they dump the fruits out the prickles are all gone."

"We have heard these people eat bugs. Is that true?"

"Well, they sometimes roast and eat grasshoppers; then there is a kind of fat green grub they boil and eat. I've tried them; they taste pretty good."

"How about fish?"

"Up here they get a few little ones with small nets, but down on the coast they catch a lot with hooks and lines and big nets, going out in log canoes and tule rafts."

Now the man speaks again. "I forgot to teach you something else about hunting," he says. "Look at this." He takes down a flat crooked stick that has been poked in back of one of the roof poles; it looks very much like an Australian boomerang.

"You hold it this way to throw it," he grabs it by one end and raises it slant-wise. "But it takes a lot of practice before you can kill rabbits and ducks with it."

"Does it come back to you if it misses?" we ask, thinking of the boomerang.

"Why, no, I never heard of such a thing! We have other ways, too; sometimes we set a big net in a canyon and drive rabbits into it; besides that we make traps and snares, mostly for small animals, but one of them is big enough to catch a deer!"

"You speak of a big net—that must take lots of twine. Where do you get that?"

He turns and looks toward his mother, who has been taking it all in.

"Mother," he says, "show these people how you make twine."

She reaches for a ball and unwinds part of it; it is simply fiber, reddish brown in color. Now she shapes some of it into two long wisps; then baring her right thigh, she lays one end of the wisps on it, side by side. Now comes a most amazing sight. She rolls the wisps forward, twisting them tightly; then she rolls them backward. Instead of unrolling the two combine into a stout cord! She continues until she

reaches the end of her wisps, then adds more fiber. Before we know it she has made a strong cord twenty feet long!

"I usually roll it in a ball as I make it," she says, "but I left it loose this time so you could see."

We thank her, but there is something we want to know. "What kind of fiber is that and how do you prepare it?"

This time the guide answers. "It comes from a plant you call dog-bane or Indian hemp, but their name is *wicha*. They pull off the bark and soak it in boiling water; then they can easily separate the fiber, which they roll into a ball."

"If you want a light colored cord to make a woman's apron, better use *tokmut*," the old woman says. "There are other kinds too, but not so good. You can make heavy cord or rope from *bunuvut*, but you have to soak the leaves a long time until they begin to rot."

"*Tokmut* is what you call milkweed," the guide says, "*bunuvut* is one kind of yucca."

"You seem to know how to do everything else," we say to the man. "Perhaps you can show us how to make arrowheads."

"That's easy—every man knows that. You make them with a *pilaxpish*."

"What's that?"

He fumbles in a pouch and draws out a prong of deer-antler, rounded on one end, pointed on the other. "This is it," he says. He lays it down, takes a digging stick and steps outside, returning in a few minutes with some chunks of flinty stone and a much battered round stone about two inches in diameter. "I had these buried outside," he says, "to keep the flint fresh."

Now he takes the round stone and strikes the edge of one of the flint chunks several times knocking off thin flakes; looking them over he selects one and holding it in his left hand, takes the antler prong in his right, and pressing its point against the flint, gives a little push—which forces off a fine flake. He repeats the process and within ten minutes he has produced a beautiful little triangular arrowhead.

"That's all there is to it," he says. "Knives are harder to make because they are bigger and you have to shape them by striking the flint with the round end of the antler, knocking off chips. When they're shaped you finish the edge the way I made the arrowhead. Then all you have to do is put on a wooden handle—saw a slot into one end of it with a flint flake and stick the knife blade in with pitch or tar."

"Now we know," says the guide. "They say you have a smart way to straighten arrowshafts. Will you show us?"

"Why not?" our host replies. He reaches into his pouch again and brings out a thick hump-backed little stone about four inches long and two wide; the bottom is flat. It has a groove across the back—and looks as if it were made of soapstone. "This," he says, "is a *yaulash*." He reaches up and gets a piece of cane from a bunch he is saving to make arrow-shafts.

"Now look; the stone is cold; the cane has several crooked places; I run the cane through the groove and nothing happens." He takes a stick and pulls out several hot coals from the fire, lays the stone upon them. After a few minutes he pulls the stone off with his stick—it's too hot to handle. Now, kneeling, he runs the cane through the groove again, especially the crooked places, to and fro. The cane is almost straight when he takes it out; the few crooked places remaining he straightens quickly with his hands! "That's it," he says. "When the cane gets cold it will stay straight."

"How about making heavy stone tools, like pestles?" we ask.

"That is really hard work. First you find a piece of the right kind of rock about the size you need; then you keep pounding it with a harder stone until you get it the right shape. Every blow knocks off a few grains only. It takes many days and much patience to make a good pestle; if you strike too hard you may break the thing and ruin it. But once made, it will last a life-time. Mortars are even harder; you have to use a pointed hard stone to dig out the inside."

We thank him and add: "One thing more; we'd like to know about basket making. Is any of this family good at it?"

The women look at each other; finally the younger one says:

"We can both make baskets if we have to, but not very good ones; we trade for the ones we use. But my sister, though—" she turns to the little boy. "Run over and ask your aunt if she is willing to show these strangers how to make baskets." He is back in a few minutes with a favorable report.

The young woman leads us to a little hut at the back of the village, with a fair sized arbor. "My sister's husband was killed by a bear a few years ago," she says. "So now she makes baskets and trades them for meat and other things she needs. Of course she still gathers her own acorns and seeds." She calls and a somewhat older woman comes out of the hut.

"We have been teaching these people the right way to live," she tells her sister. "But we thought you would be the best one to tell them about baskets." She turns to us, "We'll see you later," and she leaves us.

Our new teacher leads us to the arbor, where a mat is spread with three large pottery bowls near by. Each contains something being soaked in water. "This bowl contains a kind of grass we call *yulalish*; the body of our basket coils is made from it; this is a brown rush, *shoila*, for making the patterns. And this one has splints from the bush called *shoval*; we wrap the coils and sew them together with these splints. They have to be split very carefully with a sharp flint flake, so all will be exactly the same size. We keep them all wet while we are working so they will bend easily."

"*Shoval* is a kind of sumac," the guide interposes.

The woman goes into the hut and comes back with an unfinished basket, dripping wet.

"I had this in another bowl in the house," she says. "Now I'll show you how we work."

She takes a small awl that seems to be made of bone, and punctures the upper edge of the coil already completed; then runs one of the splints through the hole, bends it over the foundation of grass, runs it through another hole, and so on, adding more grass and more splints as needed, coil after coil, the latest sewed fast to the one before. "To make patterns we use strips of the brown rush instead of splints," she says. "Or, if we want a black pattern, we dye splints by boiling them with a special kind of mud from certain springs that we recognize because they have a reddish scum. It takes a long time and a lot of careful work to make a good coiled basket."

"We make a number of kinds in this coil weave—large deep bowls for storing things and for use as pack baskets carried in a net, basketry caps for the women to wear—sometimes used for drinking bowls; flat baskets for winnowing, shallow bowl baskets, small baskets with the edge turned in for keeping trinkets."

"We make a different weave, too—not very pretty, of thin rushes called *pivut*. We make these for leaching acorn meal, for sifters, and for gathering food. The upright rushes are held together by pairs of rushes twined together, running crosswise; they're all openwork. I'd show you how it is done, but I have no *pivut* rushes right now. They can be made quite quickly, very different from coiled baskets."

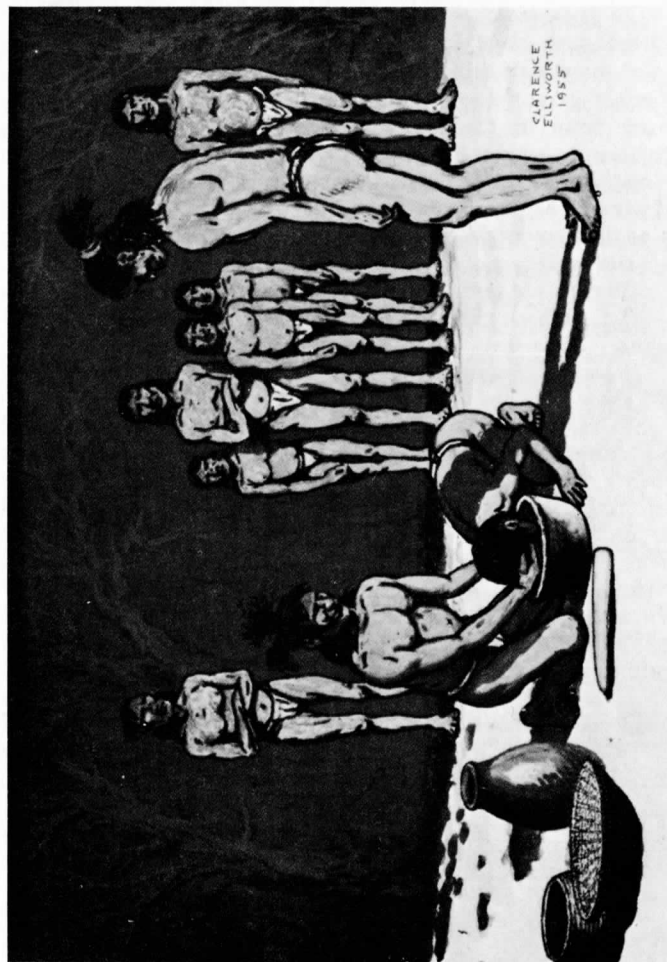


FIG. 4—BOYS' INITIATION. The candidate drinks *mani*.

CLARENCE
ELLIS
1955

We thank the lady and make our way back to our temporary home.

Ceremonies—Boys' Initiation

Early that evening we hear the sound of singing and rattling coming from the direction of the corrals; evidently some kind of ceremony is about to take place.

"You should see this," says the guide. "It's the initiation of the boys into the tribe." We hurry over.

Looking into the big corral we see a bright fire burning in the center, while a crowd of men, women, and children is standing around the sides, except at the far end. Here we see a row of well-made stone bowls, painted in various colors, lined up near the fence, together with several bowl-shape baskets, and near by a few flat wooden wands, some tipped with stone blades, some with crystals, and a pile of feathered head ornaments; while back of the bowls four eagle-feather kilts are hanging on the fence itself.

Turning to the smaller corral we find that something is going on inside, although there is no fire; the place is dark except for moonlight. We dimly see someone kneeling behind a big stone bowl at the south end; beside him stands another man, while seven boys 13 or 14 years old are waiting near, each with a grown man beside him.

"The kneeling man is a chief," the guide whispers. "The man standing beside him is one of his helpers; the boys are going to be initiated. Each has a guardian to take care of him."

Now the chief pours out something from a basket into the stone bowl, pounds it with a stone pestle for a while, chanting in a queer monotone. Then he scrapes out whatever he had in the bowl into a sieve-basket and sifts it back into the bowl again; then he pours water on it out of a pottery bottle. Finally he stirs the concoction with a stick.

Next one boy after the other steps up to the stone bowl, kneels down before it, bends over, starts to drink—while the chief reaches out and supports the lad's forehead with his hand. (Fig. 4) When the chief thinks the drinker has had enough he lifts the boy's head away from the bowl. Then another boy steps forward.

"What is that stuff?" we ask.

"These people call it *mani*," says the guide, "made from a plant called *naktomush*, but in Mexico it is called *toloache*. It is a weed with a pretty, large, trumpet-shape white flower. You name it 'Jimson weed.' These Indians dry and grind the

roots to make the very strong medicine you see in the bowl."

Now the chief speaks to his helper who goes out the gateway. "He's going to tell the people in the *Wamkish*—that's the big corral—that the *mani* is coming. . . These people say that in old times the stone bowl and the baskets used to walk by themselves from this place to the *Wamkish*. In fact they have a song which says 'The *tamyush*'—that's the stone bowl—'walks by twisting,' which is still sung while the boys are walking over."

Going out to see what happens next, we see the boys taken into the big corral, where they start dancing around the fire while a group of singers chant, keeping time with a rattle that looks like two turtleshells on a stick. "A *mani* song," the guide says. We seat ourselves on the ground with other spectators and watch. Gradually the boys seem to weaken, stagger, almost fall. When this happens their escorts step out and lead them out of the enclosure.

"They take them back to the other corral where the boys go to sleep while somebody watches over them," the guide explains. "The medicine is strong and they have queer dreams. If any animal or spirit offers to help them in these dreams, they must remember who it is, because that one will be their spirit helper through life."

We notice that very few of the people go out—evidently there is something more to come.

Soon we hear weird noises and here comes a crowd of naked, painted men, crawling on all fours, howling like wolves, growling like bears, screaming like panthers, or rushing about, waving their arms, hooting like owls, cawing like crows. They pour in through the gate, but string out as they encircle the fire—soon the crawlers get up and they all dance.

We watch these dancers for an hour or more; then make our way back to our hut and stretch out again on our mats. On the way we ask the guide "All we heard was songs and rattles. Don't these people have any drums?"

"No drums at all," the guide assures us. "Not even hollow log drums like some of the tribes have farther north."

Next night comes another dance in which the boys are invited to take part—and some of them do. This might be called a magicians' dance for many of the performers are shamans. All are painted black and white; all wear feather head-ornaments. One has a bow and arrow—suddenly to our horror he shoots another dancer; the man falls with the arrow sticking out of his back; he begins to cough up blood. The



FIG. 5—CEREMONIAL BASKETS given to boys when initiated, the larger for articles used in ceremonies, the smaller for small sacred objects.

shooter, still keeping time to the singing, dances up to his victim, pulls out his arrow—says a few magical words—and the victim jumps up and starts dancing again as if nothing had happened. It's a clever trick of course, but how was it done?

Almost as shocking is another dancer who pulls a stone knife out of its case hanging on his breast, and apparently cuts off his own tongue! He dances around the fire, showing off the bleeding tongue, then pops it back into his mouth again. When we see him the next day his tongue seems perfectly normal!

Another takes the owl-feather tuft from his head and hurls it into the fire; we can smell the feathers burning. Yet a few minutes later the man picks up his headpiece from the ground in good condition—and puts it back on again.

The final act is the extinguishment of the fire by the dancers. As they dance they pull the logs and sticks out—dance upon them until they are extinguished. How this can be done without burning themselves is beyond us—but they do it. Some of the dancers in this rite carry wands with stone points which the guide says are called *paviut*. (Fig. 6)

The next night, we learn, is devoted to *Wanawut*, the Sacred Net which is said to represent the Milky Way—the pathway of spirits. We see a trench over two feet deep, dug in the form of a man with outstretched arms and legs, and in it lies a net made of hair in the form of a person—the guide says it is human hair.

On the body part, which is about five feet long, are placed three rounded stones at regular intervals.

When the ceremony starts we see one boy after the other let himself down into the body hole, step gingerly from one stone to the other, then swing himself out again. We notice some women standing near watching anxiously.

"They are the mothers of the boys," the guide whispers. "It is believed that if a boy slips off one of the *Wanawut* stones he will not live long—that's why they are worried; if he goes through without slipping he will have long life."

Two men fill up the hole, burying the *Wanawut*.

The spectators file out of the *Wamkish*, and following them we note that they are gathering near a fire some distance away; arriving we observe what looks like the beginning of another ceremony. Eight men carrying skin robes kneel down in two rows facing each other, the rows about five feet apart; then they spread the robes over their knees, while spectators pile near by a number of strings of the thick disk-shape shell beads they use for money, and a few fine coiled baskets.

Then a man gives to each kneeler on one side a little white cylinder about three inches long, attached by a string perhaps a foot long to another similar one, but this one is black; then he lays a bundle of short sticks between the rows and stands back.

At once some women standing near begin to sing a haunting little song repeated over and over, while the men who have received the cylinders fumble with them a while beneath their robes, swinging their shoulders in time to the song, then hold up their hands.

"Now the men opposite try to guess which hand holds the white cylinder, pointing to the one they think," the guide explains. "For each failure the hiding side gets one counting stick. When all have been guessed correctly the other side takes the cylinders and does the hiding, and the first side the guessing. There are fifteen counting sticks; when one side gets them all they win the game—also the wagered beads and baskets. It often takes a long time."

We watch for a while; when we finally go home neither side has won. Waking up at various times in the night we still hear the haunting little song, over and over.

The final night the medicine men make what is called a sand-painting, with various dry colors, circular in form, about 4 feet across, flat on the ground. Our guide says it represents the earth; anyhow it has various figures on it and a 5 inch hole in the middle.

Now an elderly man the guide says is a chief, addresses the boys lined up beside the sand-painting.

"Do not eat when you first get up in the morning," he says, "nor when you first come in from a journey; wait until your spirit has had time to catch up with you. Do not eat before old people have eaten. Never eat the last of gathered seeds or acorns; these must be kept for the old. No boy may eat deer meat until he is as tall as his father's shoulder; he must never overeat. Be kind to the old; never turn your back on a stranger in your house. If you have food of your own it is wrong to refuse a hungry old person or stranger. Do not whip your children; take a bath every morning. If you follow these rules all will go well with you; if you fail the black spider or the rattlesnake will bite you or the bear or the mountain lion will catch you, or you will fall into nettles."

Now, as we watch, the chief approaches one of the boys, and first making a weird groaning, blowing sound three times, touches the boy's head, shoulders, arms, breast, legs, and feet with something he holds in his hand, then places it in the boy's mouth. The guide says it's a mixture of sage-seed and salt.

Then the boy, chewing, kneels at the edge of the sand-painting and spits his cud into the central hole. Then the same process is repeated with the other boys. When all have finished,



Fig. 6—CEREMONIAL WANDS

the chief, with two helpers, push the sand-painting into the hole, filling it up.

"Now," the guide says, "the boys are officially members of the tribe. It's strange," he continues, "that most of this initiation has been put on by leaders from other clans, except the *mani* the first night. They bring presents for the boys, including the feather head tufts they will treasure all their lives, (Fig. 11) and ceremonial baskets. (Fig. 5) In return these outside leaders receive gifts from the boys' parents and friends. Did I tell you the boys are not allowed to eat meat or salt during the ceremony? And —oh yes, one thing more; some clans stretch the boys' initiation out to a month."

While he is speaking we notice one of the chief's helpers breaking some small pieces of brush from the *Wamkish* fence; these he hands to the chief, who steps up to the fire and facing north, makes his invocation. Then he throws the pieces in—they blaze up and are gone.

"What's that for?" we ask the guide.

"Oh, that's easy to explain," he responds. "Years ago they used to burn the whole *Wamkish* after every ceremony—but it takes so much work to build a new one that in most clans they have cut it down to this. Did you know that in some places they build the fence lower and keep the spectators outside looking over? Then the corral is not as large as this one. And some clans build the fence entirely of upright poles.

"There is another ceremony for the boys," he continues. "But it is not held very often; it is for older ones, really young men, who can stand pain. It is supposed to give them courage.

"It starts in the evening; the boys gather around the fire, while men dance, tooting on whistles made of cane, all night long. About dawn the chief makes the boys all drink hot water; then marches them to the place selected, outside of the village, where a hole has been dug into a nest of big red ants. The chief has gathered a lot of the ants in a basket; now he makes each boy lie down in the hole while he pours live, biting ants over the poor boy's body.

"And that is not all; when the chief thinks a boy has had enough he brushes the ants off him with a bunch of nettles—and that's almost as bad as the ants. And then once more they make a sand painting, with a hole in the middle for the boys to spit their sage seed and salt. While this is going on the chief makes three times his strange groaning blowing sounds which they say reach the sky.

"Sometimes after this ceremony the boys race to a big rock down the valley, and the winner paints a pattern on the rock in red and black.

"I am sorry I can't show you this ant ceremony; but I hear they are having an initiation for girls at a little village over near the base of that big mountain. Do you want to see it?" We do.

Ceremonies—Girls' Initiation

We are thrilled at the chance to see a girls' initiation ceremony—also to visit another village, although the guide says it will be a long walk. Returning to the hut to tell our friends where we are going, we find only our young hostess and the children at home.

She fears we may be hungry, so she gets out for us something we had not noticed before—a flat rectangular sack neatly woven of brownish fiber cord. This she fills with flakes of dried venison, and gives us also a small pottery water-bottle with a carrying thong. Our guide takes possession of these.

He leads us up out of the valley across a rolling plain until we reach the village, a somewhat smaller one, standing on high ground among oak trees, not far from the mouth of a canyon from which flows a small stream of water which the guide says is never-failing. A little ways down this expands into a pool near which is a small hut similar to the others, but lower, and minus a smoke-hole.

"The pool is the bathing place and that little hut is the sweathouse," the guide tells us. "When they want a sweat-bath they build a fire inside and leave it burn until the hut is very hot; then when the fire burns out and the smoke is gone they go in and close the door curtain. When they have sweat long enough they come out and plunge into the pool. They do this to purify themselves for a ceremony, to cure themselves of ailments, or just to get really clean. Every morning everybody bathes in the pool anyhow as in the other village; first the men and boys; then the women and girls. Children often play in the water."

We turn toward the village proper and note that all of the huts are round except one—a fine example of the long type. (Fig. 7). Here also are enclosures like corrals, set among the oaks; one larger, one smaller. People are moving about; apparently the ceremony is about to start.



FIG. 7—LUISEÑO INDIAN DWELLING
(long type)

We enter the *Wamkish* and join the crowd of spectators. Three girls are seated between the fireplace and the south side; in front of them is a huge coiled basket, fully three feet across, the largest we have ever seen. It contains various feathered articles—probably head-dresses, feather ribbons, and eagle-plume skirts; the guide says there are some large quartz crystals also, all of them considered sacred.

"That man you see standing there is a chief from another clan; he and his helpers conduct this part of the ceremony. All the people of the home clan do is to invite them and give them presents—such as strings of shell beads and *pavivut* wands with flint blades in the end, (Fig. 6) both of which they use like money."

Now the chief makes his weird groaning sound three times by way of invocation, and speaks briefly.

"He is giving the names of the three girls," the guide explains, "and telling the people that they have now arrived at the age of womanhood."

Next the chief kneels in front of one of the girls and drawing some dried leaves from a pouch, rolls them with his fingers into a little ball. Then he makes his groaning invocation three times and places the ball in her mouth. (Fig. 8). Now his helper hands him a basketry cap full of liquid and the chief gives the girl a drink of this. She gags and gags but finally controls herself; then the chief moves on to the next one to repeat the process.

"That stuff he put in the girl's mouth was *pavivut* tobacco," the guide explains, "and the liquid was warm water. It's a good thing she did not vomit;—if she had, people would think she had not been virtuous!"

We have noticed three long shallow holes in the ground in back of the girls, lined with coarse grass. When all have received their tobacco, they rise, walk back to the holes and lie down in them face up. Then a woman covers them with fresh green leaves from some kind of shrub, and finally hides their faces with bowl-shape openwork baskets. The audience begins to file out, and we follow.

"Those holes have been warmed with fire," the guide says, "and the girls have to lie in them three days and nights. Only their mothers or the wife of the chief can see them or tend to them, and they are allowed only warm water to drink, and may eat no meat or salt. They come out a little while at night to eat, and then the pits are warmed again.

"Once a day they must sit up while their attendant dresses their hair; then lie down again with baskets over their faces. Did you notice that each one has a long strip of abalone shell hanging by a thong from her right wrist? That's to scratch herself with; she must not touch any part of her body with her fingers while she is in the hole. I am afraid they do not get much sleep, because every day the women dance around them singing and the men do the same all night except during their eating time. It's a strange thing, but the men use no rattles for these songs and dances; instead they have a man to beat time for them on some special stones that give out a ringing sound—and that's the nearest thing to a drum these people have. Both men and women sing many different songs, mostly referring to the old legends. I forgot to say that not only the first outside clan, but two others take part."

"May we see what happens when the three days are up?"

"No, that's for the women only, but I can tell you. When they get up out of their holes the chief's wife paints their faces and gives to each a necklace made of pieces of transparent mica stone. Then she puts on each girl bracelets and anklets made of hair. Now they can be seen by the tribe again, but can eat no meat or salt for a month, nor drink cold water."

"What, no sand painting?"

"Oh, yes—they have that too—at the end of a month. First the chief gives them a moral lecture something like that to the boys, but he adds such things as: 'Marry the right way, don't run around, keep your children clean. Follow these rules and you will become pleasingly plump and your hair will grow nice and long; but if you fail—the black spider will get you, or the panther, or the bear, or——'

"The sand painting is a special one, but it has a hole in the middle like the others. The chief walks three times around it, giving a groaning sound every time he passes the north side; next he puts in each girl's mouth a little ball made of ground sage seed and salt, after touching various parts of her body, each time making his invocation. Finally each girl kneels beside the sand painting, bends over it and spits her cud into the hole. Several men push the sand painting into the hole, filling it up.

"The next thing is a race; the girls and some other women run out to a rock not far from the village where the chief's wife scrapes paint from each girl's face and makes a design on the rock with it. In some clans the girls do this them-

selves. The girls leave their hair bracelets and anklets at the rock. That ends it, except that the girl should not drink cold water for a year. But she can marry any time, for now she is acknowledged to be a woman."

"You say it is a month from the time they get out of their holes until the sand painting is made. How do these people figure it?"

"By the moon. It must go through all its changes and come back to the same stage before they can wind up the ceremony."

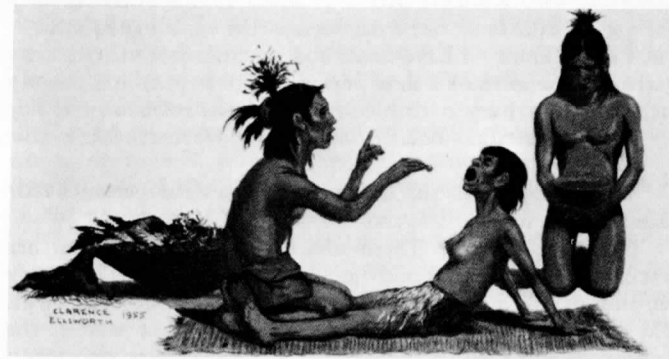


FIG. 8—GIRL'S INITIATION. He feeds her tobacco.

Ceremonies—Mourning

"What happens when someone dies?" we ask our guide.

"Well, when a person seems about to die, the relatives and friends all gather and begin to weep and wail around the house, and this continues for some time after the last breath. Before the body becomes stiff the knees are drawn up and the arms folded; then the corpse is wrapped in matting or in a rabbit skin blanket; tied with bark or yucca-fiber rope; sometimes some prized possessions are placed in the bundle.

"Not far from the village is a low hill where they cremate the dead. They dig with their digging sticks and flat stones to lift out the earth, a pit four or five feet long and about three feet wide, perhaps two feet deep. They put dry grass in the bottom, then dry brush, then logs, to make a pile about two or three feet high. Then they carry out the body, lay it on the pile, head to the north. Now someone brings a blazing stick and lights the grass. While the fire is burning the people wail again, throw in belongings of the dead, sometimes of-

ferings of their own. Finally the fire burns out and its ashes, with the ashes of the body, sink into the pit. And then they do a very strange thing—they take sticks and pull out of the pit a few bits of burned bone. Then they push the earth back into the pit, filling it up. And the people go home."

"But what do they do with the bones?"

"That's the strange part—not very nice. They grind them in a mortar, mix the resulting powder with water, and pay a special clan official called *tako*—'the eater'—to drink it! I don't know why they do this; they say it's an old custom, handed down from long ago. I've heard that it's done to keep the good qualities of the dead person still alive in the tribe—but I don't know. I have heard too that in some villages they gather all the ashes of a dead person and put them in a pottery jar; then they bury it or hide it among the rocks on the side of some mountain. But I don't know whether that's true or not."

"What happens to the house where the dead person lived? Does anyone live in it again?"

"No, of course not. Those who have lived with him or her rescue their belongings and go to live elsewhere. Then they set fire to the house; that is the brush covering the poles. The brush burns, the poles burn, the earth that was on the brush falls and then the house is gone, like the man or woman who lived in it."

"Is that all?"

"No, there are several ceremonies in honor of the dead. For the most important one they wait until a number of village people have died; then they make a crude figure of rushes to represent each one. It has abalone shell eyes, real hair, a nose, a mouth, and sometimes ears, but the most important part is to dress it in some of the clothes and ornaments that belonged to the one who has passed away. Of course the chief of the village where they lived makes the arrangements, but experienced men from other clans do the work—for which they receive gifts."

"Just what do they do?"

"First of all they gather in the *Wamkish* and sing all night; then they go to the small corral and make the images. When all is ready the chief goes back to the *Wamkish* and digs holes to stand the images in. Now he calls three times and the others answer; then they march in singing and set the images in the holes, while relatives of the dead lay out gifts for the image-makers.

"The makers stand near the images and sing. Finally the chief swings the whirling-board which makes a roaring sound, three times; then they pick up the images again and carry them back to the small corral. Here they paint themselves and put on their feather head-dresses and when they hear the whirling-board again they march back to the *Wamkish* with the images, going around the fire, shaking a turtle-shell rattle; then they dance.

"Finally they burn the images and their clothing and ornaments with them, but the visitor helpers have the right to take off and keep some of these things. While the images are burning and all through the night men and women dance and sing. Next day they have the whirling dance, wearing the eagle-plume skirt. They finish about noon."

"What is the 'whirling dance'?"

"Let us go back to the village where we were before. They are going to hold another kind of a mourning ceremony for a man who died a year ago—just for him alone. It will be tomorrow morning, and a whirling dance is part of it."

We go back to the first village and stay in the same house where we slept before. In the morning, after we have eaten, we make our way to the *Wamkish*. Here we find the people gathering, while two men are setting out a row of painted stone bowls, sacred baskets and *paviut* sticks along the wall on the south side; now they add a pile of feather head-tufts, and hang two long feather ribbons—bands of small feathers strung together on two strings—and three of the eagle-feather skirts on the fence back of the other things. Then the men leave; next, a line of singers files in, led by a man with a turtle rattle, who take their stand on the south side; then their leader steps forward and speaks. We can not hear him very well.

"He's a chief," the guide says. "He is telling about the man who died; then he will make a prayer."

He steps back to his place as fifteen or twenty men come in, fantastically painted, each wearing at least one of the split-feather head-tufts. Now the singing begins and the men dance for a while; then file out again.

"Now comes the whirling dance," the guide whispers.

We expect to see a group of dancers wearing the eagle-feather skirts—but instead a girl walks demurely in carrying a small basket; she dips her hand into it and scatters the contents here and there about the enclosure.

"That's acorn meal," our friend tells us. "It's an offering,"



FIG. 9—THE WHIRLING DANCER RESTS.

Now we hear a strange wavering call and a man carrying a club rushes into the *Wamkish*. He dashes hither and yon, sounding his call, and finally drops to one knee with his club upraised and his eyes turned toward the sun. After holding this pose a little while, he rises and walks out.

Shortly here comes trotting a man wearing the eagle-feather skirt, feather head-tufts, across his shoulders long ribbons or bands of small feathers strung together; in each hand carrying a feather-trimmed stick—a weird-looking creature striped

with broad horizontal bands of white paint, and after him trots our friend with the club. After circling the enclosure they stop in front of the chief; the club carrier takes his stand with the singers, but we notice he keeps close watch on his companion.

"Where are the other dancers?" we ask.

"There is only one in this dance," the guide says. "Now see what he does."

The singers start a low chant with rattle accompaniment and the dancer trots about here and there, occasionally striking his sticks together. Now he kneels and bows his head; his shoulders rise and fall in time to the chant; next he gets up again and continues his trotting dance, finally stopping to rest, bending over on his two sticks in front of the chief. (Fig. 9)

Shortly a song takes the place of the chant; the singers swing their bodies in time and the dancer rising, begins to whirl, faster and faster, until the eagle feathers of his skirt stand straight out. On and on he whirls until we are sure he will fall from dizziness. But at last he stops, perfectly composed but breathing rather hard; then he and his club carrier leave the *Wamkish*, followed by the chief and the singers.

"The whirling dance is over," the guide says. "It honors the eagle, a sacred bird with these people. The whirling represents the eagle circling in the sky; when the dancer bent over and his shoulders rose and fell, the eagle was eating his kill."

Now the chief and his two helpers come into the *Wamkish*; they are carrying small baskets of different colored sand and earth. They make a round sand-painting on the south side of the fireplace; it has a circle pattern of small diamond figures with a gap on the north and, as usual, a hole in the center. Next several women lay baskets and strings of shell beads around the sand-painting.

"Those are gifts for the men who have carried out the ceremony," the guide says. "The pattern of the painting differs with different clans."

One of the chief's helpers calls three times and the dancers return singing, the leader carrying a parcel wrapped in white buckskin. They line up south of the sand-painting. Now the chief takes the package and opens it—it contains a split owl-feather head-tuft, looking much the worse for wear. Throwing aside the cover he holds it reverently and kneels at the side of

the sand-painting, making three times his groaning, blowing invocation, which they say reaches the sky.

Everyone watches silently as he gently places the tuft in the central hole, (Fig. 10) then with his two helpers pushes in the sand-painting, filling it to the brim. One of the helpers gathers the gifts and carries them out of the *Wamkish*.

"So that you will understand," our guide explains, "that was the head-tuft belonging to the man who died a year ago—the same one that was given him when he was initiated into the tribe as a boy. He had treasured it all his life. (Fig. 11) Now his spirit is raised to the stars. The rest of his belongings that had not been burned shortly after his death were thrown into the fire last night, except a few little keepsakes. This marks his end on earth. Another good man is gone forever." The spectators file silently out; there is no laughter or banter.

Back in the hut we ask the guide; "Are there any more services for the dead?"

"One more that I can think of," our guide replies. "After the death of a chief. In that one they kill a young eagle that has been taken from its nest for that purpose—they squeeze it until its heart stops. They say the bird represents a young woman who ran away from her tribe and was changed into an eagle by *Chungichnish*. . . . Oh, yes, there is still another ceremony used by the tribes next on the north, when they raise a long thin pole painted in different colors, with several baskets tied to the top. I don't know much about that one."

Government

"You talk about chiefs," we say to the guide. "We've seen different ones taking charge of ceremonies. Why are there so many?"

"That's easy to answer," he tells us. "Every clan has its chief; they call him *nota*, and there are many clans—maybe 50 or more. The *nota* has charge of the sacred matting bundle where all the clan's ceremonial things are kept, such as feather head-tufts, eagle-plume skirts, rock-crystals and the like; really he's boss of the clan. He inherits his job from his father. Usually he has an assistant-chief called *pumutchi* who takes his place when needed."

"When we saw the boys' initiation ceremony it looked as if he had two helpers," we argue.

"Oh, those were special ceremony helpers called *paba*. The chief picks medicine-men for that work if he can."

"Isn't there a head chief for the whole tribe?"

"Why, no. Now that I think of it, there isn't. Each village stands by itself. But if there are several clans in the same village, the chief of the biggest clan is boss."

"Are there any other clan officers?"

"Well, there's the chief of the rabbit-drive—he gets his job from his father, too; and there's the *tako*—the 'eater'—I told you about."

"Just what is a 'clan'?" we ask.

"It's like a big family—people related through their fathers."

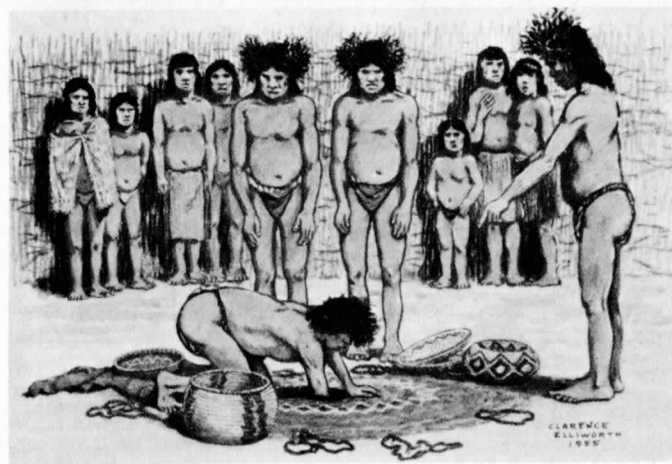


FIG. 10—BURYING THE DEAD MAN'S FEATHER-TUFT

Children belong to the same clan as their father. Being kin-folk they can't marry inside their clan. They say that in the old days the clans were in two big groups; then you couldn't even marry within your own group."

"Are the clans named for animals? We know they are in some tribes."

"Only a few here. They have all kinds of names, like 'Deep Basket,' 'Morning Star,' or 'Meat Beggar,' as well as 'Horned Owl,' 'Fox,' 'Deer,' and 'Mosquito.' The name for the tribe as a whole is 'Ketchum'; some say 'Kayaynakwish'.

"I say 'tribe,' but all it amounts to is a lot of villages speaking the same language—or almost the same."

Marriage Customs

Still thinking of ceremonies, we ask our hosts, "How do you people get married?" They seem rather puzzled, but finally the young woman says:

"Perhaps one of you is looking for a wife. If so, I know a young widow who would make a good one. You could get her very cheaply, too, because both her parents are dead, and you would need only to make a few presents to the girl herself—that is, if she likes you."

We disclaim any such desire and explain that we want to know just what happened when our young hostess was married. She hesitates, looking at her husband, but he says, "Go ahead and tell them."

"I used to live with my parents," she says, "in that village over by the mountain, and of course I belong to another clan. This young man often came over to our village to help with our ceremonies, and he noticed me. We talked together and became good friends. Then one day he asked me if I would marry him. I really liked him, so I answered 'Yes, if my parents agree'."

"A few evenings after that his father came to our house and talked with my parents; then my own father asked me if I liked the young man and was willing to marry him—of course I said 'Yes'. Some days later his father came back with a lot of presents; I think seven strings of shell beads, six nice baskets and a long feather ribbon; that settled it."

"My father engaged a chief and a helper from still another clan to take me to my new husband. My mother brushed my hair very smooth, trimmed my bangs, put a new skirt on me, painted me up as prettily as she could, and hung around my neck three strings of good thick shell beads; then the chief and his helper walked with me, one on each side, to this village and to this house, and many people of my clan followed. When we reached this door, they took my three strings of beads for their pay, replaced them with necklaces made of downy feathers, raised the door curtain and I went in and sat down on a mat beside this young man, who was expecting us. That made me his wife. Then we had a big feast."

"Didn't any chief or medicine-man say any words to marry you?"

"Why, no—why should they?"

"Is it true that among your people parents sometimes marry off or sell a girl without her consent?"

"That is tried once in a while, but usually it doesn't work. The marriage breaks up. Sometimes parents will promise a little girl to a little boy while they are still children; that often turns out well; but when they reach the age of marrying if they don't like each other, there is no marriage."

"Is it true that sometimes a man will have more than one wife?"

"Yes, a good provider may have two or three, but that does not happen often. Such a man usually marries one or more sisters of his first wife. Sisters are not so likely to quarrel. Speaking of sisters, if a man's wife dies, and she had an unmarried sister, he is supposed to marry her."

"What happens if a marriage breaks up?"

"If a wife leaves her husband, her parents must repay the value of the gifts they received. If the man leaves the woman, neither she nor her parents receive anything, but she is free to marry again."

"When we talk about marriage, that leads us to think about babies. Can you tell us what happens when a baby is born?"

"I ought to know by this time," the young woman says. "First of all when we expect a baby, both my husband and I are careful to keep as quiet as we can, to drink only warm water and eat no meat or salt, and this we continue quite a while even after the baby has come. My husband must not smoke, either; that's all for the good health of the child. When the time comes near, we get a woman who has had experience to stay with me. Just before the time they build a little fire for a while on the floor where I am to lie on my mat, to warm it if the weather is cold. After the baby comes this woman washes it in warm water, and she washes me—and she buries what came with the baby right away, outside the house, so the dogs won't eat it, and the cord after a few days. When the baby is washed and dried the woman puts it on the cradle board very soon."

"How about naming the baby?"

"Here we believe in naming a child soon after it is born. Somebody belonging to my husband's clan has to do it—my children of course belong to his clan. They usually pick out the name of some ancestor who is now dead—to keep the same names in the clan. My husband's uncle named our first child."

"Do they keep the same names all through their lives?"

"They often do. But in some clans they don't even give



FIG. 11—FEATHER HEAD-TUFT. Given to boys on initiation.

sometimes we pray for good yields of acorns and chia, but that is about all."

Medicine-Men

"Don't your medicine men have any ceremonies?" we ask.

"Each medicine man has his own way of doctoring, according to his dream. Most sickness is caused by witchcraft, so the doctor prays and sings to overcome it. Sometimes he sucks the painful parts to get out whatever the bad witch has wished into them. Some doctors also give herb medicines to be swallowed, and that often works very well; other things need poultices and they know how to make them."

"Do they use any tools?"

"Well, for their singing they use a turtle or deer-hoof rattle, and sometimes a flat wooden wand with special designs painted on it and with snake rattles tied on. For opening boils and cutting out splinters they strike a fresh sharp flake from a block of flint."

The Creation—Gods and Spirits

Now we tackle another subject.

"We have heard that you people know how the earth was created. Will you tell us?"

them real names until they are about seven years old. Before that they have just baby names."

"Do you people have a war ceremony or a war dance?" This time the man answers.

"We do not need anything like that; we have had no trouble with other tribes coming in and trying to take our country. We are a peaceful people. Sometimes there may be a quarrel between families or clans, and people have sometimes been killed, but things quiet down; there is no real war. Sometimes we hunters put on a little ceremony for good luck, and

They sit for a while without answering, then the young man says:

"Mother, you know the story. Why don't you tell them?"

Grandma sighs and closes her eyes for a moment, then she begins:

"They tell it several ways; but the main part is about the same. In the beginning everything was silent and empty; the only living being was a Spirit."

"That must be the one you people call God," the guide whispers.

"This Spirit," she continues, "created two other beings, first in the shape of great balls, brother and sister. The sister became the Earth, the brother the Sky. Although they were brother and sister, they were married; and in time Mother Earth gave birth to many beings, which she sent out in different directions. At first they were all like people, but many of them became animals later, even trees. Everything we have, all animals, trees, people, stars, are the children of the Earth Mother and the Sky Father. Among them was the Sun who at first came too near to the earth and burned some of the people. So he was sent out of sight to the east; later he rose into the sky from the east high enough so he did not burn anyone, just as he does now. Among the people was a wise and powerful man named Wiyot; but he was bewitched by an evil frog-woman, and although doctors worked on him and his people took him to different hot springs to try to cure him, he finally died at a hot spring called Mumona.

When they wanted to burn his body they sent Coyote out to hunt for fire; but before he returned somebody else had made it with a fire drill; so when Coyote came back, Wiyot's body was already burned except the heart. Coyote was angry, so he snatched that and carried it off. Wiyot's spirit rose to the sky and became the moon. They say Wiyot was the first to bring death to the world. Since his death every one of us has to die."

"Are there any other gods or spirits?" we ask.

"The greatest is Chungichnish, who was born near the coast northwest of here, and who still lives as a powerful spirit. He taught us how to do our ceremonies properly and what to teach our children. He claimed that people who do wrong will be punished."

"You mean after they die?"

"Maybe so, I don't know; but anyhow before they die. We tell all about it to boys and girls when they are initiated—

how the black spider, or the bear or the panther will bite them—how all kinds of bad things will happen to them if they don't do right."

"What happens to a person's spirit when he or she dies?"

"The ghost stays around for a while, but finally ascends to the stars. You have seen that trail across the sky on a clear night?"

"Why, yes; we call it the Milky Way."

"That's the trail they take; but just where they go or what they do we don't know."

"How about other spirits?"

"I know about some bad ones; there's Takwish who lives in the mountains northeast of here. He's like a man covered with feathers."

"What does he do?"

"He can take the form of a fireball or a shooting star and catch people. He carries them up on top of our big mountain here and pounds them until they are tender; then he eats them. Then there are queer animals or spirits who live in some of our springs and streams. They don't like people; so it's best not to build your house too close to a spring or a pool."

Hoping that Takwish will not decide to eat us for dinner, we thank our hosts and say farewell to them. With real regret we leave Indian California and return to our modern day, to our wonderful age of freeways packed with stalled cars, bumper to bumper, of subdivisions reaching across the country as far as the eye can see, thousands of little houses, practically just alike. And with H-bomb raids just around the corner.

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